

THE ROMAN CURIA

The Roman Curia is the ensemble of the dicasteries and bodies that assist the Pope in the exercise of his supreme pastoral office for the good and in service of the Church throughout the world and of the particular Churches, assisting in the maintenance of the unity of the Faith and the communion of the People of God and in the promotion of the proper mission of the Church in the world. There are a number of departments of the Roman Curia, each with their own responsibilities and competencies. The most important parts of the Curia are the Secretariat of State and the various Congregations. Then, there are Pontifical Councils and Pontifical Commissions.

Apart from the formal structures of the Roman Curia, the Pope may convoke an extraordinary consistory of the College of Cardinals to consider special difficulties or questions. In this way, they can advise him as a body, not just the Cardinals who advise the Holy Father as part of the Roman Curia itself, but all the Cardinals from around the world. The Synod of Bishops also serves to advise the Pope and selects a representative group of bishops to meet periodically or when specially called, to serve collegiality.

SECRETARIAT OF STATE

The Secretariat of State is headed by the Cardinal Secretary of State. This is the most important body within the Roman Curia. It is divided into two sections.

General Section

The first section, the General Section, is responsible for: affairs relating to the day-to-day service of the Papal office, examine matters which fall outside the competence of any of the other dicasteries and bodies of the Holy See, regulating the functions and activities of representatives of the Holy See, distribute encyclicals, apostolic constitutions, apostolic letters and the like to the bishops throughout the world, publication of the "Acta Apostolicae Sedis" -- the official record of all official documents and acts. It also oversees the official communication of Pontifical acts and activities of the Curia, the Press office, including the official media organs of the Holy See such as the daily newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, as well as Vatican Radio and the Vatican Television Centre. It also maintains the statistical bureau and publishes the data from time to time.

Relations with States

The second section, the Section for Relations with States, is responsible for the Holy See's diplomatic corps, its relations with civil society, negotiating concordats with States relating to the Church's position and status, and ensuring representation of the Holy See before international organizations.

CONGREGATIONS

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is the next most important dicastery of the Roman Curia. This Congregation used to be called the "Holy Office" and before that it was known as the "Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition." The primary duty and responsibility of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is to promote and preserve the Catholic Faith throughout the Church. Anything touching on the doctrine of the faith or on morals is within the competence of this dicastery. In particular, the Congregation has the responsibility of examining the writings of theologians to ensure that they are not inconsistent with Catholic doctrine and, even, of disciplining theologians who refuse to recant views considered erroneous or perilous to the Faith. If required, the Congregation may publish declarations dealing with certain questions of faith and morals. There is also a section of the Congregation responsible for the investigation and verification of private revelations. The Congregation is responsible for the *Pontifical Biblical Commission* and the *International Theological Commission*.

Pontifical Commission "Ecclesia Dei"

Originally under the CDW, this commission was established by Pope John Paul II in 1988 when he introduced the indult for priests to say the Tridentine Mass as a response to the actions of the Society of St. Pius X. Especially since the introduction of the *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum* by Pope Benedict XVI, the role of the commission (now under the CDF) is to assist with questions regarding the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite and to handle negotiations for the reconciliation of the SSPX.

Congregation for the Eastern Churches

This Congregation has full responsibility for matters pertaining to any of the Eastern Catholic churches and their governance. It has

competence over all matters which in the Latin rite would be governed by one of the other dicasteries. The only dicasteries that retain their competence with respect to the Eastern churches are the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the Apostolic Penitentiary, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. So, all matters which would normally be within the competence of say, the Congregation for Bishops or the Congregation for the Clergy, are dealt with by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

This Congregation has primary responsibility for the Sacred Liturgy and the Sacraments. They must prepare all rubrics, approve translations, etc. The Congregation also has competency in anything that regards Sacred Art or Sacred Music. It is responsible for regulating the veneration of holy relics and confirming Patron Saints.

Congregation for the Causes of Saints

This Congregation is responsible for the investigation and examination of the lives and the writings of candidates for beatification and canonization. It is responsible for verifying and preserving sacred relics.

Congregation for Bishops

The Congregation for Bishops is responsible for the delineation, division, establishment, and merging of dioceses, for the consideration of candidates to be appointed to dioceses and the recommendation of candidates to the Holy Father. It is also responsible in a more general sense for assisting the Bishops in their governance of their own dioceses. It receives their quinquennial reports and organizes their visits *ad limina Apostolorum*.

Pontifical Commission for Latin America

This Commission is charged with assisting the various dicasteries of the Roman Curia by studying the life of the Church and its development in Latin America. It operates under the auspices of the Congregation for Bishops.

Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples

This Congregation is responsible for missionary activity throughout the World. It is the Congregation which used once to be called the "*Propaganda Fide*" or Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

Congregation for the Clergy

This Congregation is responsible for matters relating to secular priests and deacons. One of its chief roles is to try and ensure a more equitable distribution of priests throughout the world. It is also responsible for the laicization of priests wanting to leave the priesthood.

Pontifical Commission for the Preservation of the Artistic & Historical Patrimony of the Church

Operating under the aegis of the Congregation for the Clergy, this Commission is responsible for preserving the artistic and historical heritage of the entire Church, including the Vatican Archives and the Vatican Library.

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

This Congregation has responsibility for matters concerning religious orders and congregations and the priests and religious belonging to them. It is also responsible for the establishment of new foundations, and for reviewing changes to the constitutions of groups already established. It is also responsible for members of Third Orders, Secular Institutes, Societies of Apostolic Life, and for associations of the faithful which qualify for official recognition.

Congregation for Catholic Education

This Congregation is responsible for seminaries, Catholic Universities, Pontifical Institutes, and Catholic schools and education generally.

Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology

This Commission, operating under no particular Congregation, is charged with promoting and directing excavations in the Catacombs of Rome and on other sites of Christian antiquarian interest, and of safeguarding the objects found during such excavations.

TRIBUNALS

Apostolic Penitentiary

The Apostolic Penitentiary is responsible for all matters concerning the "internal forum" and indulgences. It is also responsible for providing priests to hear confessions to the Patriarchal Basilicas of Rome. During a Conclave, the Major Penitentiary, the Cardinal who heads the Apostolic Penitentiary, is one of the only Cardinals who does not step down from his post.

Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signature

This is a tribunal of appeal from the Tribunal of the Roman Rota. It is the highest court of appeal available in matters concerning the Church's tribunals.

Tribunal of the Roman Rota

This is a court of appeal from local Tribunals, and a court of first instance where there is no competency with local Tribunals.

PONTIFICAL COUNCILS

Pontifical Council for the Laity

The council is responsible for matters relating to the coordination and promotion of the apostolate and Christian life of the laity.

Pontifical Council for Christian Unity

This Council is responsible for ecumenical dialogue and relations with other Christian Churches.

Pontifical Council for the Family

This Council is responsible for protecting and promoting the Family. It assists Bishops throughout the world in Family matters, organizes conferences on Family issues, etc.

Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization

This Council is responsible for catechetics and promoting the faith in parts of the world ("the West") where Christianity is well-established but being eclipsed by secularism.

Pontifical Council for Life

Its members are bishops, theologians and laypeople whose expertise or talents lie in the development of the culture of life the Holy Father

called for in Evangelium Vitae.

Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

This Council is responsible for promoting peace and justice in the World according to the Gospels and Catholic Social Teaching.

Pontifical Council "Cor Unum"

This Council is responsible for expressing the care of the Church towards those in need. It fosters charitable works by the faithful, assists those in urgent or calamitous situations, and those in special need of assistance.

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples

This Council is responsible for the care of people who are transient and who are not cared for within traditional diocesan structures. Also responsible for the Apostleship of the Sea.

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health-Care Workers

This Council is primarily responsible for assisting Health-Care Workers, their spiritual needs and those of their patients, assisting local churches to train and regulate the activities of hospital chaplains, etc.

Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts

This Council's role is to advise on matters of the interpretation of canon law.

Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue

This Council is responsible for ecumenical matters concerning the Church's relations with non-Christian Faiths.

Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers

This Council is responsible for the Church's relations with those who do not believe.

Pontifical Council for Culture

This Council facilitates relations between the Holy See and the Cultural World.

Pontifical Council for Social Communications

This Council is responsible for matters relating to the use of the media for the spreading of the Gospel.

OFFICES

Office of the Apostolic Camera

This Office is the central board of finance in the Papal administrative system, which at one time was of great importance in the government of the States of the Church, and in the administration of justice, led by the Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church, who takes on importance during the vacancy of the Holy See (after a Pope dies and before a new Pope is elected).

Office for the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See

This Office is responsible for administering the Holy See's property and goods.

Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See

This Office administers funds donated by the dioceses around the World, income from investments, and the proceeds of the annual Peter's Pence collection. The Vatican Bank (a privately held financial institute that reports to a board of Cardinals and ultimately the Pope) is *not* under the jurisdiction of this prefecture, as its holdings are not considered Vatican property.

OTHER BODIES

Prefecture of the Papal Household

The Prefect of the Papal Household is responsible for arranging all audiences with the Pope and administering the Papal apartments.

Pontifical Master of Ceremonies

The Pontifical Master of Ceremonies is responsible for organizing all papal liturgies and assisting the Pope at those liturgies. He also organizes the Wednesday General Audience in the Pope Paul VI Auditorium.

The Swiss Guard

The "Corps of the Pontifical Swiss Guard" or "Swiss Guard" is a small force responsible for the safety of the Pope since 1506, including the

security of the Apostolic Palace and access to the entrances to the Vatican City. Its official language is Swiss German. It serves as the de facto, if not de jure, military of the Vatican City, consisting of about 150 professional soldiers.

Labour Office of the Apostolic See

The Labour Office of the Apostolic See is responsible for labour relations of the Holy See with its employees. The office also settles labour issues which arise.

PONTIFICAL ACADEMIES

The Pontifical Academy Cultorum Martyrum

Founded under the title Collegium Cultorum Martyrum in 1879, the Pontifical Academy of Martyrs promotes devotion to them, enhances and deepens the history of the witnesses of the faith, and monuments related to them, from the first centuries of Christianity.

The Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy

The Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy is dedicated to training priests to serve in the diplomatic corps and the Secretariat of State of the Holy See. The diplomatic service of the Holy See can be traced back to the First Council of Nicaea when Pope Sylvester I sent legates to represent him during the discussions of the council.

The Pontifical Academy for Life

The Pontifical Academy for Life is a Roman Catholic Church institution dedicated to promoting the Church's consistent life ethic. It also does related research on bioethics and Catholic moral theology.

The Pontifical Academy for Sciences

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences has as its aim is promote the progress of the mathematical, physical and natural sciences and the study of related epistemological problems. The Academy is headquartered in the Casina Pio IV at the heart of the Vatican Gardens. The academy holds a membership roster of the most respected names in 20th century science, including many Nobel laureates.

The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences

The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences has the aim of promoting

the study and progress of the social sciences, primarily economics, sociology, law, and political science. The Academy, through an appropriate dialogue, thus offers the Church the elements which she can use in the development of her social doctrine, and reflects on the application of that doctrine in contemporary society. The Academy, which is autonomous, has a close relationship with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.